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Research Article

A Teacher Empowerment Framework for Enhancing Professional Capability: Evidence from a Mixed-Methods Study

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ABSTRACT

Teacher empowerment remains a critical concern in public education because it influences teachers' professional agency, participation in school improvement, instructional effectiveness, and capacity to contribute meaningfully to educational change. Building from a previously conducted mixed-method investigation on teacher empowerment among public school teachers and school heads in Tagbilaran City and Bohol Divisions, this article presents the development of a research-based teacher empowerment framework. The empirical foundation of the framework was drawn from quantitative findings involving school administrators and teachers, as well as qualitative insights from selected participants. The original study revealed that school heads perceived teacher empowerment more favorably than teachers themselves, particularly in the domains of decision-making and impact. While professional growth and self-efficacy were rated highly by both groups, teachers reported more moderate levels of empowerment in decision-making. Qualitative findings further identified inclusive leadership, trust, role assignment, support, collaboration, and communication as enabling conditions, while micromanagement, limited autonomy, restrictive decision-making, insufficient engagement, and lack of transparency served as hindering factors. Based on these findings, the proposed framework highlights five key areas: decision-making autonomy, professional development access, trust and recognition, collaborative leadership, and empowerment in practice. The framework offers practical guidance for school heads, teachers, and education supervisors in designing school-level mechanisms that strengthen teacher participation, professional agency, and shared accountability. The article contributes to educational management literature by translating mixed-method findings into an actionable framework for teacher empowerment in public school contexts.

Keywords: *Educational management, Framework development, Professional agency, School leadership, Teacher empowerment, Teacher capabilities*

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Introduction

Teacher empowerment is a vital condition for improving educational quality because it strengthens teachers' professional commitment, job satisfaction, instructional effectiveness, and participation in school improvement. Previous studies have shown that teacher empowerment predicts professional commitment and job satisfaction, with decision-making and self-efficacy serving as particularly influential dimensions (Kauts, 2020; Vesudevan, 2021; Ahrari, 2021). It also involves providing teachers with the resources, support, and autonomy needed to perform their roles effectively and contribute to positive school outcomes (Ahmadi, 2022; Nagabhooshanam, 2022).

In public school systems, empowerment is not merely a matter of assigning responsibilities to teachers. It requires organizational conditions where teachers are trusted, supported, and meaningfully involved in decisions that affect teaching, learning, and school development. Teacher participation in decision-making is especially important because it strengthens professional ownership, collaboration, and commitment to school initiatives (Rafferty, 2018; Chopra, 2020). However, decision-making remains a persistent challenge when teachers have limited participation in institutional processes despite exercising some autonomy in classroom-related matters (Tindowen, 2019).

Professional growth and self-efficacy are also central to teacher empowerment. Professional development programs support teachers as lifelong learners and help them respond to changing educational demands (Savić, 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2019). Likewise, self-efficacy strengthens teachers' confidence in influencing student learning, sustaining resilience, and remaining engaged in their work (Lazarides, 2020; Demir, 2020). These dimensions are essential because empowered teachers are more likely to view themselves as capable professionals and active contributors to school improvement (Marjuni, 2020; Ahmadi, 2022).

In the Philippine public-school context, teacher empowerment is supported by legal and policy foundations that recognize teachers as central actors in educational improvement. These include the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Republic Act No. 4670 or the Magna Carta

for Public School Teachers, DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016 on Learning Action Cells, and DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017 on the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. These foundations emphasize teacher welfare, professional growth, reflective practice, collaboration, and participation in school improvement. Celosia (2026) similarly identified these legal and policy bases as supporting teacher empowerment in the Department of Education context.

Despite these policy supports, empowerment may still be unevenly experienced in actual school practice. The mixed-method study of Celosia et al. (2026) found that school heads had a more positive view of teacher empowerment than teachers themselves. Both groups rated professional growth and self-efficacy favorably, but teachers perceived their decision-making power as only moderate. This perception gap suggests that empowerment cannot be assumed simply because opportunities, programs, or leadership structures exist. What school heads perceive as empowerment may not always be experienced by teachers as meaningful participation, autonomy, or influence. Thus, there is a need to move beyond describing teacher empowerment levels and toward developing a structured framework that can guide schools in translating empowerment principles into concrete practices.

The qualitative findings of Celosia (2026) further support the need for such a framework. Enabling factors included inclusive leadership, trust, role assignment, support, collaborative culture, and effective communication. In contrast, hindering factors included micromanagement, autonomy limitation, restrictive decision-making processes, insufficient engagement, and lack of transparency. These findings show that teacher empowerment is shaped not only by individual teacher capacity but also by the leadership climate and organizational practices created within schools.

Anchored on Teacher Empowerment Theory by Klecker and Loadman (1996) and informed by the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) of Short and Rinehart (1992), the proposed framework conceptualizes teacher empowerment as a multidimensional process involving decision-making, professional growth, self-efficacy, and impact.

Celosia (2026) retained these domains to examine teacher empowerment within the Department of Education context. However, the framework article extends the contribution of the study by organizing the findings into practical key areas for school-level implementation.

Therefore, present article does not aim to re-report the full mixed-methods investigation. Rather, it uses the findings of the prior study as the empirical basis for developing a school-based Teacher Empowerment Framework. While the original study examined levels, perceptions, and experiences of teacher empowerment, this article focuses on translating those findings into a practical framework that may guide school heads, teachers, and education leaders in strengthening empowerment practices.

Methods

This research is framework-development article using Design and Development Research (DDR) approach, particularly the model/framework development type described by Richey and Klein (2014), to guide the systematic translation of mixed-method findings into a research-based teacher empowerment framework.

The framework was developed from three major sources of evidence: the theoretical foundation of teacher empowerment, the quantitative results on teachers' level of empowerment, and the qualitative themes on enabling and hindering leadership practices. The original study was based on the Teacher Empowerment Theory by Klecker and Loadman (1996), informed by the School Participant Empowerment Scale of Short and Rinehart (1992), and quantitative findings and qualitative themes from the prior study. The study examined teacher empowerment through the domains of decision-making, professional growth, self-efficacy, and impact (Celosia, 2026). These domains served as the conceptual foundation for identifying the key areas of the proposed framework.

The quantitative findings were used to determine the priority areas for framework development. The previously reported quantitative findings were treated as design inputs rather than as new empirical results. Areas showing comparatively weaker teacher perceptions

were identified as priority conditions that the framework needed to address, particularly teachers' participation in decision-making and their perceived influence within the school. Professional growth and self-efficacy were rated very highly by both school heads and teachers, while teachers rated decision-making only as moderate and impact lower than school heads' ratings. These results indicated that the framework needed to address not only professional development but also the less-experienced aspects of empowerment, particularly teacher participation in decision-making and recognition of teacher influence within the school community.

The qualitative themes from the prior study were subsequently examined for their implications for framework development. Rather than re-reporting these findings as new empirical results, the identified enabling and hindering conditions were treated as design inputs. Enabling practices, including inclusive leadership and trust, meaningful role assignment and support, and collaborative culture and communication, were translated into organizational mechanisms that the framework seeks to strengthen. Conversely, hindering conditions such as micromanagement, limited autonomy, insufficient engagement and transparency, and restricted opportunities for professional development and innovation were considered conditions that the framework should minimize or address (Celosia, 2026). This process allowed the qualitative evidence to inform the development of the framework's strategies, implementation mechanisms, and intended school-level practices.

The framework development process proceeded through four interconnected phases. First, the prior mixed-method findings were examined to identify areas of teacher empowerment that required greater organizational attention. Second, the qualitative themes were mapped according to whether they represented conditions that strengthened or constrained teacher empowerment. Third, the quantitative domains and qualitative conditions were integrated to generate the five operational areas of the proposed framework. Finally, each key area was operationalized by translating it into specific objectives, strategies

and interventions, performance indicators, required resources, responsible persons, and implementation timelines. Through these phases, the findings of the previous study were used as design inputs for developing a practical and school-based Teacher Empowerment Framework rather than being presented as new empirical results.

Through this process, five key areas were generated: decision-making autonomy, professional development and access, trust and recognition, collaborative leadership, and empowerment in practice. These areas were not treated as separate activities but as interconnected components of a school-based empowerment system. Decision-making autonomy responds to teachers' moderate rating in decision-making. Professional development and access builds on the high ratings in professional growth while ensuring that opportunities remain equitable and relevant. Trust and recognition address the need for teachers to feel valued and influential. Collaborative leadership responds to the qualitative findings on inclusive leadership, communication, and teamwork. Empowerment in practice ensures that empowerment principles are embedded in daily school operations, instructional planning, monitoring, and professional collaboration.

Declaration of AI Use in Research Methodology and Manuscript Writing

This research employs artificial intelligence (AI) methodologies, including AI-assisted manuscript writing. The AI tools used, such as Chat GPT and Quillbot, were used for language polishing, organization, or manuscript refinement. This integration upholds transparency and ethical standards, aligning with established guidelines.

Dr. Rex U. Celosia, Dr. Maria Liesle A. Dopeno, Jay L. Galimpin, the researchers, affirm full responsibility for the ethical use of AI throughout the study. In manuscript writing, considerations include transparent authorship attribution, disclosure of AI tools to peer reviewers, ensuring clarity and coherence, and safeguarding data security. Integrating AI-generated and human-authored content is approached with diligence, emphasizing review,

quality assurance, and commitment to openness and reproducibility.

Empirical Basis of the Teacher Empowerment Framework

The proposed teacher empowerment framework was derived from the major findings of a previously conducted mixed-methods study. Rather than presenting new empirical results, this section explains how the prior quantitative and qualitative findings served as inputs in the development of the framework. The framework responds to the reported differences in how school heads and teachers perceived teacher empowerment, as well as to the qualitative themes that explained the leadership practices enabling or hindering empowerment in schools.

The previously reported quantitative findings showed that teacher empowerment was generally rated positively. However, school heads consistently perceived teachers as more empowered than teachers perceived themselves to be. Across the four domains of teacher empowerment, school heads gave very high ratings, while teachers gave comparatively lower ratings, particularly in decision-making and impact. The overall composite mean showed that school heads rated teacher empowerment as very high, while teachers rated it only as high. This statistically significant difference indicated a perception gap between leadership-provided empowerment and teacher-experienced empowerment (Celosia et al., 2026).

Among the four domains, professional growth and self-efficacy emerged as relative strengths in the prior study. Both school heads and teachers rated professional growth very highly, suggesting that teachers had access to staff development, learning opportunities, and programs that supported their professional advancement. Self-efficacy was also rated very highly by both groups, indicating that teachers generally believed in their capacity to help learners, influence student learning, and perform their instructional roles effectively (Celosia et al., 2026). These previously reported findings supported the inclusion of professional development and access as one of the major components of the framework.

However, the prior quantitative findings also revealed areas requiring improvement. In the decision-making domain, school heads rated teacher empowerment as very high, while teachers rated it only as moderate. Teachers gave lower ratings to their involvement in curriculum decisions, school budget decisions, and teacher selection processes (Celosia et al., 2026). This indicated that while school leaders may believe that teachers are sufficiently involved in school decisions, teachers themselves may not experience such involvement as meaningful or influential. For this reason, decision-making autonomy became a central key area of the proposed framework.

A similar perception gap was previously reported in the impact domain. School heads perceived teachers as having very high impact, particularly in terms of collaboration, giving advice, and teaching other teachers. In contrast, teachers rated their impact lower, with several items falling only within the moderate level (Celosia et al., 2026). This suggested that teachers may not always feel that their expertise is recognized or that their contributions influence colleagues and school practices. These findings served as a basis for including trust and recognition as a framework component.

The qualitative themes from the original study provided further explanation for these quantitative findings. The study identified enabling leadership practices that supported teacher empowerment, including inclusive leadership and trust, empowerment through role assignment and support, and collaborative culture and communication. These themes indicated that teachers felt empowered when school heads sought their ideas, respected their individuality, assigned meaningful roles, provided financial and moral support, encouraged teamwork, and communicated clearly (Celosia, 2026). These qualitative findings informed the framework areas on collaborative leadership, trust and recognition, and empowerment in practice.

On the other hand, the qualitative findings from the original study also identified hindering factors, including micromanagement and autonomy limitation, insufficient engagement and transparency, and restricted professional development and innovation. Teachers

reported feeling voiceless when decisions were predetermined, when consultation was limited, and when school heads overly controlled school operations (Celosia, 2026). These findings reinforced the need for a framework that protects teacher voice, strengthens participation, and embeds empowerment into actual school processes rather than treating it as a general leadership ideal.

Taken together, the previously reported quantitative and qualitative findings showed that teacher empowerment requires more than professional development opportunities. While professional growth and self-efficacy were identified as strengths, teachers' lower ratings in decision-making and impact suggested that empowerment must also involve meaningful participation, recognition of teacher expertise, transparent communication, and shared leadership. Thus, the proposed framework was designed around five interrelated key areas: decision-making autonomy, professional development and access, trust and recognition, collaborative leadership, and empowerment in practice.

Result and Discussion

The proposed Teacher Empowerment Framework was developed to translate the mixed-method findings into a practical guide for strengthening teacher empowerment in public schools. It responds to the central finding that school heads and teachers do not always perceive empowerment in the same way. Although school heads rated teacher empowerment very highly, teachers reported comparatively lower levels of empowerment, particularly in decision-making and impact (Celosia et al., 2026). This perception gap indicates the need for a framework that does not merely assume empowerment but makes it visible, participatory, and measurable in school practice.

The framework is anchored on the view that teacher empowerment is a multidimensional process involving teachers' participation in decisions, access to professional growth, belief in their own instructional effectiveness, and perceived influence within the school community. In the original study, these dimensions were examined through decision-making, professional growth, self-efficacy, and impact

(Celosia, 2026). The proposed framework extends these domains by converting them into five school-level action areas: decision-making

autonomy, professional development and access, trust and recognition, collaborative leadership, and empowerment in practice.

Table 1. Teacher Empowerment Framework

Objectives	Strategies/ Interventions	Key Performance Indicators	Resources Needed	Responsible Persons	Timeline
Key Area 1: Decision-Making Autonomy					
Enhance teachers' autonomy in decision-making	- Organize decision-making workshops. - Establish shared governance councils	- Increase in teacher-led initiatives. - Positive feedback in autonomy surveys	Training materials, Facilitation experts	School Heads, Teacher Representatives	6-12 months
Key Area 2: Professional Development and Access					
Provide equitable professional development opportunities	- Conduct needs assessments. - Create tailored professional development programs	- Participation rate in PD programs - Improvement in teacher skill assessments	Professional development budget, PD experts	Professional Development Coordinator	Ongoing
Key Area 3: Trust and Recognition					
Build a culture of trust and recognition in the school community	- Implement regular recognition programs. - Develop mentorship and peer support systems	- Increase in teacher satisfaction ratings. - Number of recognition awards	Budget for recognition programs, Mentorship training	School Heads, HR Department	1-2 years
Key Area 4: Collaborative Leadership					
Foster collaborative leadership and shared decision-making	- Develop leadership training for school heads and teachers. - Set up joint decision-making bodies	- Leadership training completion rate. - Decisions made by joint bodies	Leadership development programs, Collaboration tools	School Heads, Leadership Trainers	1-3 years
Key Area 5: Empowerment in Practice					
Translate empowerment principles into daily educational practices	- Integrate empowerment goals into school development plans. - Monitor and evaluate the implementation of empowerment practices in classrooms	- Alignment of school plans with empowerment goals - Positive classroom evaluations	Monitoring and evaluation tools, Professional development for teachers	School Heads, Teachers	Continuous

Key Area 1: Decision-Making Autonomy

Among the five framework areas, decision-making autonomy addresses one of the clearest gaps identified in the prior study. While school heads perceived teachers as highly empowered in decision-making, teachers themselves reported a more moderate experience of participation. This discrepancy suggests that the presence of consultation mechanisms does not necessarily mean that teachers experience meaningful influence over school decisions.

Within the framework, teacher participation should therefore extend beyond consultation or implementation. Teachers should be given meaningful opportunities to contribute to the planning, deliberation, implementation, and evaluation of decisions concerning curriculum, instructional programs, resource priorities, and school improvement initiatives.

When teachers can see that their professional judgments contribute to actual school decisions, participation becomes more than symbolic consultation. It can strengthen ownership of school initiatives and help align leadership decisions more closely with classroom realities.

Key Area 2: Professional Development and Access

Professional development emerged differently from decision-making because it was already identified as a relative strength in the prior study. Its inclusion in the framework is therefore intended not simply to address a deficiency, but to sustain and deepen an existing source of teacher empowerment.

The empowering value of professional development depends not merely on teachers' attendance in training activities but on the relevance, accessibility, and applicability of those opportunities to their professional needs. Learning Action Cells, mentoring, peer coaching, and school-based professional learning may provide teachers with opportunities to examine classroom concerns, exchange expertise, and take greater responsibility for their continuing growth.

In this sense, professional development becomes empowering when teachers are positioned not only as recipients of training but also

as active contributors to professional learning within the school.

Key Area 3: Trust and Recognition

The comparatively lower teacher perception of impact points to a concern that formal acknowledgment alone may not fully capture teachers' experience of professional recognition. Teachers may be recognized for their work yet still perceive limited influence over colleagues, practices, or school-level decisions.

For this reason, trust and recognition in the framework extend beyond formal awards. They may be demonstrated when school heads seek teachers' professional advice, acknowledge classroom innovations, assign leadership responsibilities according to expertise, and provide opportunities for teachers to mentor or support colleagues

Such practices can make recognition part of teachers' everyday professional experience and may strengthen their sense that their knowledge and contributions have value within the wider school community.

Key Area 4: Collaborative Leadership

The qualitative findings indicate that teacher empowerment is strongly influenced by how leadership is practiced in everyday school interactions. Inclusive leadership, trust, meaningful role assignment, support, collaboration, and clear communication emerged as conditions that enabled teachers to experience greater professional agency.

Collaborative leadership therefore provides the relational condition through which the other framework areas can operate. Decision-making structures may have limited empowering value when participation remains tightly controlled, just as professional development may have less influence when teachers are not trusted to apply, share, or lead using what they have learned.

By reducing micromanagement and creating genuine opportunities for shared responsibility, collaborative leadership can help shift teachers from being primarily implementers of school decisions to becoming partners in addressing instructional and organizational concerns.

Key Area 5: Empowerment in Practice

Whereas the first four areas identify the principal conditions through which teachers experience empowerment, Empowerment in Practice focuses on institutionalizing these conditions within the regular operations of the school. It ensures that decision-making autonomy, professional development, trust and recognition, and collaborative leadership are not implemented as isolated or temporary initiatives but are reflected in school plans, routines, monitoring processes, and leadership practices. Through this area, teacher empowerment becomes embedded in the way the school plans, makes decisions, develops its personnel, recognizes professional contributions, and evaluates its practices.

The hindering conditions identified in the prior study, particularly micromanagement, limited autonomy, insufficient engagement, lack of transparency, and restricted opportunities for professional development and innovation, suggest that empowerment cannot depend solely on individual leadership preferences. To sustain the gains developed through the first four areas, schools may incorporate empowerment-related mechanisms into the School Improvement Plan, professional development planning, teacher leadership structures, consultation processes, and monitoring and evaluation activities. In this way, empowerment becomes part of the school's organizational practice rather than an occasional leadership initiative.

Institutionalizing these practices can help sustain teacher empowerment across changing programs, priorities, and leadership arrangements. When empowerment is embedded in regular school processes, teachers are more consistently positioned as contributors to planning, professional learning, decision-making, and school improvement rather than primarily as implementers of decisions made by others.

Framework Summary

The five components of the proposed framework are interrelated. Decision-making autonomy gives teachers voice. Professional development and access strengthen their competence. Trust and recognition affirm their professional value. Collaborative leadership

creates the conditions for shared responsibility. Empowerment in practice ensures that these principles are embedded in daily school life. Together, these components form a school-based empowerment system that addresses both the strengths and gaps identified in the mixed-method findings. The framework recognizes that empowered teachers are not produced by professional development alone. They are developed through a school culture where teachers are trusted, consulted, supported, recognized, and given meaningful opportunities to influence teaching, learning, and school improvement.

Framework Limitations

This article is limited by its reliance on findings from a prior mixed-methods study conducted in specific public-school contexts. While the proposed framework is grounded in empirical findings, it has not yet been fully tested across different school divisions, regions, or school levels. Future research may validate the framework through expert review, pilot implementation, and evaluation of its effects on teacher participation, professional agency, and school leadership practices.

Conclusion

Teacher empowerment is meaningful when teachers experience genuine voice, trust, recognition, and professional agency in school practice. The proposed framework offers a practical guide for helping school heads move beyond formal participation toward more inclusive and collaborative empowerment practices. By emphasizing decision-making autonomy, professional development, trust and recognition, collaborative leadership, and empowerment in practice, the framework positions teachers as active partners in school improvement rather than mere implementers of programs. Future studies may validate and refine the framework through implementation in other public-school contexts.

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